

A
NARRATIVE
Of the
PROCEEDINGS
Of a great
Council of JEWS,

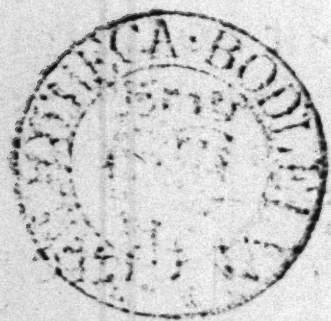
Assembled in the Plain of *Ageda*
in *Hungaria*, about 30 Leagues distant
from *Buda*, to examine the Scriptures con-
cerning Christ; on the 12th of *October* 1650.

By *Samuel Brett* there present.

Also, A
RELATION

Of some other OSERVATIONS in his Travels
beyond the Seas; and particularly, in *Agypt*, *Macedonia*,
Dalmatia, *Calabria*, *Apuleia*, *Cicilia*, *Affyria*, *Sclavo-*
nia, *France*, *Spain*, and *Portugal*; the Islands of *Cyprus*,
Candia, *Pathmos*, *Delphos*; the Cities of *Carthage*, *Co-*
rinth, *Troy*, *Constantinople*, *Venice*, *Naples*, *Leighorn*,
Florence, *Millaine*, *Rome*, *Bottonia*, *Mantua*, *Genoa*,
Paris, &c.

Printed at LONDON for *Richard Moon* at the seven
Stars in *Paul's Church-yard*, neer the great
North-door, 1655.





To the READER.

Here was nothing I more desired, then to travel beyond the Seas, and to know the various manners of the Nations of the World: for which, through God's providence, I had an opportunity offered me, to my great satisfaction, being Chirurgion of an English Ship in the Streights, where, for a cure that I did for Orlando de Spina of Gollipulo, an eminent man in those parts, I was by him preferred to be Captain of a Ship of Malta, which was set out by the said Orlando, and committed to my command against the Turks in the Arches, in assistance to the Venetian service: in the which service I spent about nine months, till the tempestuous season of the year enforced me to return into Harbour again. And in this time of employment, I made five fights at Sea, and two at Land, being chosen by lot to invade the Turk's Country, with a certain company of Souldiers collected out of our Fleet, to do some execution upon the borders of the Enemy, and to get some provision for our relief; in all which fights (although very perillous) God gave me the Victory. The whole time I spent beyond the Seas, before and after this

employment, was almost four yeers, not staying long in any one place. But first I traveled to all the Sea-towns of note for Merchandizing, to know the Trade of the places, and the conveniency of their Harbours, that I might be able to do some profitable service in Merchant-affairs. Also I travelled into several Countries, and the most eminent Cities and Towns therein, viz. Ægypt, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Calabria, Apulcia, Cicilia, Assyria, Sclavonia, some parts of Spain and Portugal; to the Islands of Cyprus, Candia, Pathmos, Delphos; to Carthage, Corinth, Troy, Constantinople; besides many other Towns and Places: but my longest abode was in Italy, and therein at Venice, Naples, Leighorne, Florence, Millaine, Rome, Bottonia, Mantua, Genoa, &c. And at last looking homeward, I came into France, taking a brief view of many eminent places in that Kingdom. And at Paris I found many of my Country-men, (of which though some be persons of great quality, yet) God knoweth they are in a low condition. And now I shall give a brief account of some of my Observations, during the time of my abode beyond the Seas.



Some





Some OBSERVATIONS in my Travels beyond the Seas.



At *Paris* our Country-men live peaceably, and enjoy our Religion without disturbance. There is a place allowed them, with necessary accommodations for the exercise of Religion. *Doctor Steward* did often preach to them: and for their form of worship, it is the same that was formerly in *England*, with the Book of Common-Prayer, and the Rites therein used; and also they continue the Innovations that were practised by many of our Clergy; as, Bowing at the Name of Jesus towards the Altar, &c. which I know giveth offence to the good French Protestants, who to me did often condemn those Innovations for Romish Superstitions: doubtless, they would do our Church, and our Religion more credit there, if they did use less Ceremony. As for the French-Papists, truly they are more civil to them, than was expected: for the Opinion of the World where I have been, is but mean of that Nation. And I believe the Italian may be their Cousen-German, for both of them are false and faithless enough. And this consideration (God having taken away *Orlando* my noble Friend, who did alwayes much countenance me) did lessen my affection to continue in that service; for my Souldiers were all Italians (except a few Greeks:) and I never saw much cause to be confident in their fidelity; but it was chiefly for fear of him, that they were so tractable to me.

As for Religion, in most parts where I have been, it is
gene-

generally the same with the Church of *Rome* : but for the Grecians (for amongst them I was) they are neither pure Protestants, nor pure Papists ; I mean, neither onely Protestants, nor onely Papists, but their Religion is a mixture of both : for though they hold some Fundamentals with us, yet they follow many of the Romish Superstitions ; and (according to my observation) they follow more the Religion of *Rome*, then the Protestant Church ; and they are much poysoned with Heresies.

But of all Nations, according to my observation, none are more zealous for the Religion of *Rome*, then the Spaniards, who, I think, for this, are more Romanists then the Romans themselves ; for with them there is an Inquisition, and in *Rome* I never heard of the same dangerous snare : there I had as much freedom, as I could desire ; and more courtesie then I could expect, without any temptation to apostate from my Religion.

As for the Occurrences that I met with, they were many : but these four were the most considerable :

First, The strangling of the great Turk by the Janizaries, at which time there was great fear and trouble in *Constantinople* ; but they enthroned his Son, and this brought a peaceable settlement : and with him there were cut off divers Basha's heads ; all whose heads (excepting the great Turk's) lay three dayes in Chargers before the Palace Gate, for the publick view of the people ; which they say is the custome for the Noblemen that are beheaded.

The next thing is, The flowing of the River *Nylus* in *Aegypt*, the manner whereof is this : it beginneth to flow about the fifteenth of *June* every yeer : the people know the time thereof, and expect it accordingly ; and this is after their Harvest, which is usually ended about the beginning of *May*. As for Rain, there seldome falleth any in *Aegypt*. During the time the River is up, all the Country appeareth like Islands. Their Towns are seated upon Hills, and their lower Grounds are all covered with Waters ; and the Inhabitants use small Boats to pass from place to place about their affairs : and because they know the yearly flowing of
Nylus,

Nylus, they provide for the safety of their Cartel till the Waters are wasted away again. There are also certain Pillars of Stone set up, with divers marks upon them, by which they know the degrees of the rising, and the usual height that the Waters do ascend unto; and if the Waters do ascend above the highest mark, they do expect some strange consequence thereof. But the greatest wonder is, the present cessation of the Plague upon the flowing of this River. There died some thousands of the Plague the day before the flowing of *Nylus* in *Grandcairo*, as they certified me; & a day or two after, not one person more died of the Infection. This I observed, that the Land is full of unhealthy fogs, mists, and vapours, which cause the disease; and it seems the Waters of *Nylus* do purifie it again.

In the Kingdom of *Grandcairo*, alias, *Pharaoh's Town*, is the City, and it is greater then any elsewhere I did behold; but *Memphis* is the nearer City: and being there, I went to see the Land of *Goshen*, where the *Israelites* did inhabit: this is a very pleasant and fruitful Land for Pasture, such, as I have nowhere seen the like. At this time also, I had an opportunity to see the Red-sea, and the place where (as they enformed me) the *Israelites* did enter their Journey through the same: there also they shewed me the great Mountains that inclosed them, when *Pharaoh* pursued them with his great Army; and the Hills where the two Armies lay in sight one of another: and there I found the true reason why it is called the Red-Sea; not because the Water is red naturally, but because the Sand is red; and this was clear to me, by plain demonstration: for I put some of the Water into a clean vessel, and there I did see it had the same colour of other Water; but the Sand is reddish, and giveth the same colour to the Water.

I shall omit many other things concerning *Agypt*; one-ly this, it is under the Turk's Dominion, and the Natives are his miserable slaves.

Thirdly, You may expect some news from *Rome*, where also I was, and did behold their great Solemnity, it being then the *Anno Sancto*, as they there call it, that is, the year of Jubilee. There

There I beheld the Pope in his glory, and how in great state he was carried about the City: the streets were thronged with the people; and as he passed by, they made them even to ring with acclamations and rejoycings: he was carried by some eminent men, having a rich Canopy over him. He made his Crosses in the Air with his fingers, and threw his blessings amongst them. And truly these delusions were so prevailing with the people, that (poor souls) they seemed to me to rejoyce, as if Christ himself had been come to *Rome*, and brought them down the felicities of Heaven.

At one time I beheld in *Naples* (perhaps it will seem strange, but it is true) about eight thousand Pilgrims going to *Rome*, for their absolution; all which the Vice-Roy of *Naples* maintained three dayes at his own charge; and on the fourth day, they did present themselves before him at his Palace in Pilgrim Weeds, (*viz.*) with leaden Pictures of Saints in their Hats, with leather Collers about their Necks, which fell down half way over their Arms, and their Staves in their Hands; and thus they marched away from *Naples*, in the posture of an Army towards *Rome*, and so farewell *Rome*: *Vidi, satis est vidisse.*

I omit to recite many other occurrences, which by conference I shall willingly communicate to my Friends; they being too many to commit to writing: onely now the fourth remarkable thing remaineth to present you withal; and that is,

The proceedings of a great Council of *Jews* assembled in the Plain of *Agoda* in *Hungaria* about thirty Leagues distant from *Buda*, to examine the Scriptures concerning Christ; on the twelfth of *October* 1650.

It hath been much desired by many honest Christians, that this Narrative of the *Jews* Council should be published, which I did intend only to communicate to private friends: the chief Argument by which they have perswaded me to do it, is, because they do conceive it to be a preparative and hopeful sign of the *Jew* Conversion; and, that it will be glad tidings to the Church of Christ; and therefore I have

have yielded to satisfie their desires therein. And thus it was :

At the place abovenamed, there assembled about three hundred Rabbies, called together from several parts of the World, to examine the Scriptures concerning Christ : and it seems this place was thought most convenient for this Council, in regard that part of the Country was not much inhabited, because of the continual wars between the Turk and the King of *Hungaria* : where (as I was informed) they had fought two bloody Battels : yet both Princes, notwithstanding their own differences, did give leave to the *Jews* to hold their Council there. And for their accommodation there, the *Jews* did make divers Tents for their repose, and had plenty of provision brought them from other parts of the Country, during the time of their sitting there. There was also one large Tent, built onely for the Council to sit in, made almost foursquare ; the North and the South part of it, being not altogether so large as the East and West part thereof. It had but one Door, and that opened to the East ; and in the middle thereof, stood a little Table and a Stool for the Propounder to sit on, with his Face towards the Door of the Tent. The said Propounder was of the Tribe of *Levi*, and was named *Zacharias* ; and within this Tent round about were placed divers forms for the Consulters to sit on. It was also inclosed with a Rail, that stood a distance from it, to prevent entrance to all strangers, and to all such *Jews* as could not prove themselves to be *Jews* by Record, or could not dispute in the Hebrew-tongue, which many had forgotten which lived in such Countries, where they are not allowed their Synagogues, as in *France*, *Spain*, and those parts of *Italy* that do belong to the King of *Spain*, viz. the Kingdom of *Naples*, with the Province of *Calabria*, and *Apuleia* ; the Kingdom of *Cicilia*, and *Sardania* ; in which places, if a *Jew* be found, and he deny the Popish Religion, he is in danger to be condemned and executed for it ; and yet profit and benefit allureth them to dwell in those Countries, notwithstanding their fears and dangers : and themselves are willing to

forget, and so neglect to teach their Children their native Language, rather than they will lose their opportunity of profit: and some have burned the ancient Records of their Tribe and Family, that they might not be discovered by searching, or otherwise. And for this defect, that they could not prove their Tribe or Family, they were not permitted to come within the Rail, but were commanded to remain without with the strangers that remained there, to see the issue of their proceeding, which were above 3000 persons, and they were for the most part of them *Germans, Almains, Dalmatians, and Hungarians*, with some *Greeks*, but few *Italians*, and not one English man that I could hear of besides my self.

I was informed, that the King of *Hungaria* not favouring the reformed Religion, did give no encouragement to any Protestant Churches to send any Divines thither; but he did allow, that some Assistants should be sent from *Rome*: and their coming thither did prove a great unhappiness to this hopeful Council.

When the Assembly did first meet, they spent sometime in their mutual salutations; and, as their manner is, they kiss'd one the other's cheek, expressing much joy for their happy meeting: and all things being provided for their accommodation, they considered of the *Jews* that were to be admitted Members of this Council; and they were onely allowed to be Members, which could by Record prove themselves to be native *Jews*; and for defect herein, I observed above five hundred refused: though doubtless they were true-born *Jews*, yet they could not by Record prove themselves so to be; and for this they were not admitted to be Members of the Council; but they did abide without the Rail with the strangers that were there: and the number of them that were accepted to be Members, was about three hundred *Jews*. And this was all that was done the first day.

On the second day, the Assembly being full, the Propounder stood up, and made his speech concerning the end of their meeting: And, *This*, said he, *is to examine the Scriptures*

ptures, concerning Christ, whether he be already come, or whether we are yet to expect his coming. In examining this question, they searched the old Testament with great care and labour, to be resolved of the Truth thereof, having many Bibles with them there for this end. And about this Point there were great Disputes amongst them. The major part were of Opinion, That he was not come: and some inclined to think that he was come; being moved thereunto by their great Judgement, that hath continued now this 1600 years upon them.

I remember very well, one of the Council in his conference with me, seemed to be very apprehensive of the great and long desolation of their Nation, ever since their destruction by the Roman Emperours; and he imputed this their affliction to their impenitency, and comparing their present Judgement, with their other Judgements they had suffered before. The same he ingenuously confessed, that he did conceive it was for some great wickedness; and that their Nation was guilty of the blood of the Prophets sent from God to their Nation, and the many Massacres that had been committed by the several Sects and Factions amongst them. *For (said he) we are no Idolaters, neither do I think we were guilty of Idolatry since our captivity in Babylon; and therefore (said he) I do impute this our calamity and present judgement, to the forenamed causes.* And this was the sum of that which was disputed amongst them the second day of their meeting; and so they adjourned till the next morning, which was the third day of their meeting.

When being assembled together again, the point that was chiefly agitated was concerning the manner of Christ his coming. And, This, some said, shall be like a mighty Prince, in the full power and authority of a King, yea, in greater power then ever any King had; & that he will deliver their Nation out of the power of their Enemies, and their Temple shall be rebuilt again; and, that the Nations shall be of their Religion, and worship God after their manner. For they hold, That the *Messiah* will not alter their Religion, whensoever he cometh. And further, concerning his Parentage,

they did agree in this, that he should be born of a Virgin, according to the prediction of the Prophets; and they agreed also, that he may be born of such a Virgin, which might be of mean note amongst their Nation, as was the Virgin *Mary*. And here some of them seemed to me to incline to think that Christ was come. Therefore when they came together again the next day, the Propounder demanded of them, if Christ were already come, and who they thought he was: and to this demand, they gave this answer, That they thought *Elijah* was he, if he were come, because he came with great power, which he declared by slaying the Priests of *Baal*: and, for the fulfilling of the Scripture, he was oppressed by *Ahab* and *Jezabel*: yet they esteemed him to be more then a mortal man, because he so strangely ascended up into heaven. And because this opinion was contradicted by others, the day following they tooke into examination the same question, to answer them that said *Elijah* was not the *Messiah*. They of the contrary opinion did urge the care and love of *Elijah*, for the good of their Nation, in that he left them *Elisha* his disciple to teach and instruct the people; which they expect to be the care of their *Messiah*. These were the chief Arguments they had to defend their opinion: and the same day towards night, it came into question amongst them, What he then was that said he was the son of God, and was crucified by their Ancestors. And because this was the great question amongst them, they deferred the further consideration thereof, untill the next day.

When meeting again, the *Pharisees*, (for some of this Sect were amongst them, that were always the enemies of Christ) they first began to answer this last nights question; and these by no meanes would yeeld that he was the Christ; and these reasons they gave for their opinion.

First, because (said they) he came into the world like an ordinary and inferior man, not with his scepter, nor Royal power; wherewith they affirmed the coming of Christ should be Glorious. 2. They pleaded against him the meanness of his birth, in that his father was a Carpenter; and

and this they said was a dishonor, that Christ should not be capable of. 3. They accused him to be an enemy to *Moses* law, in suffering his disciples, and in doing workes himself, that were prohibited on the Sabbath day: for they believe that the *Messiah* will punctually and exactly keep the law of *Moses*: and where the Gospel doth testifie of Christ, that he did fulfill the law, they reject the Testimony thereof, because they do not own the Gospel. But I observed, these reasons of the *Pharisees*, did not satisfie all that heard them, but there still remained some doubt in some of them concerning Christ; for there stood up one *Rabbie* called *Abraham*, and objected against the *Pharisees*, the miracles that Christ wrought whil'st he was upon earth, as his raising of the dead to life again, his making the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the dumb to speake. And the same *Abraham* demanded of the *Pharisees* by what power he did these Miracles. The answer the *Pharisees* returned to him, was to his purpose: They said he was an Impostor and a Magitian; and Blasphemously traduced him of doing all his Miracles by Magicke: thus, said they, he first caused them to be blinde, to be dumb, to be lame; and then by taking away his Magical Charme, they were restored to their former condition. Nevertheless this answer gave little Satisfaction to the said *Abraham*; but thus he replied, that he could not charme those that were borne in that condition, as blind, &c. and borne also before Christ himself was borne; as it appeareth some of them were: this seemed to him an absurd paradox; and truely the pressing of this argument, did almost put them to a nonplus, till at last they had this evasion (though weak and vile) they were (said they) by other Magitians convinced to be so in their mothers wombs; & that although himself were not then borne when they were born with these evils, yet he being a great dissembler, & more cunning then any Magitian before him, power was given him by the Devil, to remove those charms which others had placed: and there was one *Pharisee* named *Zebedee*, that of the *Pharisees* there did most opprobriously revile him, and Vehemently urge these things against him; but

but I conceive he did it not to the well-liking of many there that heard him, even members of the Councel. And as the *Pharisees* that day played their parts against him: so did the *Sadduces* also endeavour, (for some of that sect were also of the Councel) to render Christ vile and odious to the rest of the *Jewes* that were assembled there. I observed it was with them as it was once with *Herod* and *Pilate*; though they two could not agree betwixt themselves at other times, yet they could agree together to crucifie Christ; for the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces*, though they be much divided in opinion among themselves, yet did they at this time too much agree to disgrace and to dishonor Christ with their lyes, calumnies and blasphemies; for the *Sadduces* as well as the *Pharisees*, did in other things accuse him for a grand Impostor, and for a broacher of corrupt doctrine: in that in his Gospel he teacheth the resurrection from the dead, which they there denied to be true doctrine: but it is no new thing to see factions dissenting, to agree in some evil designe against others, as I found it by experience: being at *Rome* in the year 1650. which was the year of their *Jubilee*, there was a great strife between the *Jesuites* and the *Fryers* of the order of Saint *Dominicke*, both which were against the Protestants: and although their differences have been by the care and vigilance of the *Pope*, so smothered, that the world hath not taken much notice thereof, yet this fire broke out into a flame greater then ever it was before, (as they certified me there) both by publicke Disputings, and by bitter Writings one against another, opening the vices and errors of one anothers Faction, thus seeking to disgrace one the other; which caused the *Pope* to threaten to excommunicate the authors of all such black and libellous bookes, that did tend to the dishonor of his Clergy and Religion, to make them infamous to the world. But this by the way.

We are come now to the seventh and last day of their Councel; and on this day, this way the main Quere amongst them: If Christ be come, then what rules and orders hath he left his Church to walke by? This was a great

Que-

Question amongst them : and because they did not believe the new Testament, nor would be guided by it, they demanded some other instruction to direct and guide them in this point : thereupon six of the Roman Clergy (who of purpose were sent from Rome by the *Pope*, to assist in this Council) were called in, *viz.* two *Jesuites*, two *Friers* of the Order of *S. Augustine*, and two of the order of *S. Francis* : and these being admitted into the Council, began to open unto them the Rules and Doctrine of the holy Church of Rome, (as they call it) which Church they magnified to them, for the holy Catholike Church of Christ, and their doctrine to be the infallible Doctrine of Christ, and their Rules to be the rules which the Apostles left to the Church for ever to be observed, and that the *Pope* is the holy *Vicar* of Christ, and the successor of Saint *Peter*: and for instance in some particulars, they affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament, the Religious observation of their holy dayes, the invocation of Saints, praying to the Virgin *Mary*, and her commanding power in heaven over her Son, the holy use of the Cross and Images, with the rest of their Idolatrous and superstitious worship ; all which they commended to the Assembly of the *Jewes*, for the Doctrine and Rules of the Apostles. But so soon as the Assembly had heard these things from them, they were generally & exceedingly troubled thereat, and fell into high clamours against them and their Religion, crying out, No Christ, no Woman-God, no intercession of Saints, no worshipping of Images, no praying to the Virgin *Mary*, &c. Truly their trouble hereat was so great, that it troubled me to see their impatience : they rent their cloaths, and cast dust upon their heads, and cryed out aloud, Blasphemy, blasphemy ; and upon this the Council broke up : Yet they assembled again the eighth day ; and all that was done then, was to agree upon another meeting of their Nation three yeers ; after which was concluded upon before their final dissolution.

I do believe there were many *Jewes* there, that would have been perswaded to own the Lord Jesus : and this I assure you for a truth, and it is for the honor of our Religion,
and

and the encouragement of our Divines, one eminent *Rabbi* there, did deliver me his opinion in conference with me, that he at first feared that those which were sent from *Rome*, would cause an unhappy period to their Council; and professed to me, that he much desired the presence of some Protestant Divines, & especially of our *English* Divines, of whom he had a better opinion, then of any other Divines in the world: for he did believe that we have a great love to their Nation; and this Reason he gave me for their good opinion of our Divines, Because he understood that they did ordinarily pray for the conversion of their Nation; which he did acknowledge to be a great token of our love towards them: and especially he commended the Ministers of *London*, for excellent Preachers, and for their charity towards their Nation; of whom he had heard a great fame. As for the Church of *Rome*, they account it an Idolatrous Church, and therefore will not owne their Religion: and by conversing with the *Jewes*, I found that they generally think, that there is no other Christian Religion in the world, but that of the Church of *Rome*; and for *Romes* Idolatry, they take offence at all Christian Religion: by which it appeareth that *Rome* is the greatest enemy of the *Jewes* conversion.

For the place of the *Jews* next meeting, it is probable it will be in *Syria*, in which Country I also was, and did there converse with the Sect of the *Rechabites*, living in *Syria*: they still observe their old customs, and rules; they neither sow nor plant, nor build houses; but live in Tents, and often remove from one place to another, with their whole Family, bag & baggage. And seeing I find that by the *Italian* tongue, I can converse with the *Jews*, or any other Nation, in all the parts of the world, where I have been; if God give me an opportunity, I shall willingly attend their next Council. *The good Lord prosper it. Amen.*

FINIS.